

KEITH SEARLE OUT OF CUP TIE

KEITH SEARLE, Wycombe Wanderers' centre forward, is out of tomorrow's F.A. Cup first round tie against professionals Newport County.

Keith has broken the main ligament in his right knee and will be out for at least another week and possibly more. He saw a doctor on Monday, who ordered a second opinion. Whatever the outcome, Keith seems certain to miss the game tomorrow.

It is a critical blow for Wanderers who were looking to their centre forward to break through Newport's defences. Keith was the man to do just that.

As well as scoring goals (he has 17 already this season), Searle is also a more than useful creator as he demonstrated twice against Enfield recently. His duel with the highly rated Steve Aizlewood would have been a key factor, possibly even the turning point of the whole game, and now the responsibility for scoring goals will be on the shoulders of a new look front three.

"IMMEASURABLE"

Wycombe boss Brian Lee described the loss of Searle's services as "immeasurable" but was still confident of a good performance from the team.

With Searle out, the frontrunners will probably be Dylan Evans, Tony Horseman and Steve Perrin. Evans has not looked happy this term after joining from Cheltenham Town, with whom he scored over 20 goals last season. Then, on Saturday, he burst onto the scene with all four goals in the Blues' 4-0 away win over Walthamstow.

Whether he will be presented with the same opportunities tomorrow is highly unlikely. Alongside him will be the experienced Tony Horseman, the club's leading goalscorer with 21 to his credit. "Bodger" was out of the match on Saturday but is expected to be fit.

Other injury news will not be known until after the F.A. Amateur XI's match at Oxford University on Wednesday. Four Wycombe men are involved — Mick Hollifield, Dave Bullock, Steve Perrin and Bob Williams.

Wanderers trained last night (Thursday) under Marlow Rugby Club's new floodlights which are powered by their own generator.

As usual, the final team will not be announced until shortly before the kick off and it will be interesting to see if any change is made in midfield. One possibility is that newcomer Terry Reardon may come into the side at the expense of Tony Broomer. Reardon certainly added stability to the middle of midfield on Saturday when he replaced Mick Hollifield.

I expect the team to look something like this: Maskell; Williams, Wood, Bullock, Grant; Brothers, Pritchard, Hollifield; Horseman, Evans, Perrin, sub. Reardon.

Representatives from both clubs were out spying on Saturday. County's assistant boss Brian Harris was at Walthamstow and came away with a good impression. He felt Wanderers were a well organised side with strength in midfield. He singled out Larry Pritchard as the man to watch but also thought Newport would not give away the type of chances in the six yard box that cost Avenue so dearly.

Brian Lee visited Somerton Park to see Newport trim Darlington 2-0 on Saturday. Brian singled out three players that particularly impressed him. Centre back Steve Aizlewood, midfield skipper Brian Godfrey and winger Harold Jarman. "The whole team revolves around these three", he told me.

Aizlewood, a player similar to Wycombe's former skipper John Delaney who left last season, is a tower of strength in both penalty areas and scored one of the goals against Darlington. He is the club's leading goalscorer (not bad for a centre half).

"WOEFUL"

However, Wycombe's boss added that Darlington were "woeful" and the home side were never under any serious pressure. "County didn't play particularly well but did enough to win for maximum points with minimum effort."



PREVIEW

BY
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Brian felt Wanderers must take the game to their opponents and attack. "And we mustn't give them the time or space to let them work," he added.

As for the importance of the game the manager did not rate the match as highly as some previous cup ties, including the Amateur Cup semi-final against Hendon and the F.A. Cup games against Slough in the 1970-71 season. Brian has had experience of matches like this in the past. He took Wellington to Bristol City in 1963-64, losing out 4-2.

The latest news from Newport is they are worried about injuries to three players. Les Hill, their longest serving player, sustained a groin strain against Darlington but should be fit.

Midfield man Bob Summerhayes has a sore heel which needed an X-ray in midweek while Willie Screen, who injured his chest a month ago against Barnsley, is almost definitely out.

Missing too will be centre back Peter Passey, a regular this season, who starts a two week suspension tomorrow for four hookings last term. His place goes to an 18 year old youngster Mike Hancock, who has yet to be on the losing side with County in six matches.

Newport's record against Amateur opposition is varied. In the

last ten years they have beaten Alton Town 5-1, Hereford United twice, Guildford and Spalding United. On the other hand they lost at Bath City 2-0 and a couple of years back, crashed to a humiliating 6-1 defeat on the Underhill slope at Barnet.

That cup debacle at Barnet three years ago is still regarded as one of the most shameful incidents in the League club's 61 year history. Manager Billy Lucas (who was not in the chair at that time but was recalled immediately afterwards) admits it.

"I wouldn't say that we are still haunted by it, but it is something, obviously, which we still have on our minds," he says. And he is determined that there is not going to be a repetition this time.

REALISTIC

About Wycombe, he takes the realistic view that they are not to be under-estimated in any way. Which is why he sent assistant-manager and coach Brian Harris to run the rule over them in last Saturday's match.

Explained the Newport boss: "For Wycombe to get this far in the Cup means that they must be a fair side. We already know that they have some very good players and we have to take the view that we are on a hiding to nothing."

"We must use our experience and expertise to see us through to the next round."

Heading Newport's challenge will be linkman Brian Godfrey and his former Bristol Rovers colleague Harold Jarman.

Both these players have passed their 33rd birthdays. Godfrey's career spanned service with half a dozen different clubs and also brought him three Welsh caps. He took over the Newport captaincy when injury ruled out Brian Harris.

But while Godfrey will be in the driving seat, Newport's striking force will be spearheaded by two players — Willie Brown and Rod Jones.

Brown is a Scot, and since he joined Newport for a mere £1,500 some three years ago, has deserved his label as "the biggest bargain Newport ever made." Jones is a local part-timer who has made tremendous strides in the last couple of years.

Steve Aizlewood is only 21 but he is the club's strong man in defence. Already capped by Wales at under-23 level he has been the target of several big clubs (Newport value him at £50,000) and is destined for a fine career in the game.

One man who is supremely confident about the outcome of this Cup-tie is Mr. Cyril Rogers, Newport's chairman.

Certainly he is not haunted by the Barnet catastrophe. "At that time we went through 25 successive League matches without a win and morale could not have been lower," he said.

"The position is very different now. We have a good, professional side; the players are more mature and know what it's all about. Quite frankly, I can't see us losing."

The 1,000 stand tickets have all been sold and there were no returns from Newport's allocation of 200. If the weather stays fine, the crowd could swell to the 8,000 mark or even more. Car parking facilities at Loakes Park are only available to those with authorised car park passes.